

Another Day on Planet X

Written by Alex Baer

Thursday, 12 June 2014 17:35 - Last Updated Thursday, 12 June 2014 20:21

Here I am again: I woke up again this morning. And, once again, I ran through all my available choices. Once more, I found no basic improvement in the human condition -- nothing astonishing had happened while I slept, no new options had evolved or hatched or arrived in flying saucers, or tunneled up from the deeps. No thoroughly new way of existing had been birthed, fizzing and crackling into existence from a wormhole's termination point on the surface of the planet nearest my thoroughly beat-up and timeworn footwear.

No, here I was able to again discover life at its simplest: There was the staying-in-the-rack option, or there was the up-and-at-'em angle. While there were no new lifeform alternatives presented overnight -- none that I could detect, at any rate -- at least both of the standard choices were still available. I wake up slow and groggy these days, but I glommed onto that much, sure enough.

Foolishly, I once more pressed the rise-and-shine selection into service. Personally, I blame my bladder for routinely holding me hostage to this narrowest possible range of wake-up choices. Once more, my body was holding me hostage to its demands -- and it would not be the last time in the day, or in this life, that it would cruelly limit my preferences.

After a brief skirmish with initially blurry night vision trying to find a compromise with light, and with a darkened area of the deck, and with a large black-and-brown dog stretched out on that same surface, and with the imperatives of gravity, the first order of the day was eventually checked off the list.

Yawning note to self: Scouting report wrong. □ Dog not noted. □ Must update intel.

And, after some can-do decades going it alone, in civilian clothes no less, the reflexive *Oo-rah!* of success retreated into only a background ripple barely louder than childhood memory of the air-warming buzz of a dragonfly sketching along the lake weeds.

Soldiering on, the regulation field ration in the imagined hospital mess tent of my home was next, and I aimed for the big red cross: one caffeine I-V drip, courtesy of the NoNamo coffee pot company -- *makers of fine, flimsy kitchen kitsch since 1936* -- and then on to the briefing of

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the day.

Summer uniform today. Summer: A lazy place on the calendar, always at odds with the urgency of schedules and to-do lists. The easy comfortableness of a summer morning often wars with my daily mission roster. Luckily, with each sip of coffee, I again sign my DD Form 214 and am honorably discharged -- one slurp at a time.

With each sip of coffee, an armistice is rumored, and then an uneasy cease-fire slips into play. Finally, by mid-cup, there is peace in our time. The battered mess cup transforms again before my glazed eyes, morphing magically into glazed pottery, sporting on its shiny side a rainbow trout in a joyful leap, dancing on the green water, glossy discs staring at a stunned blue sky, frozen in position for a very long second in an eternal lake of Time.

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The clockwork innards and armatures of our pasts that we put into auto-pilot play, while courting consciousness, waiting for it to take over and drive the *meat bus* we each inhabit -- well, it's a heck of a thing. That clockwork never quite rises to the surface for inspection, but its habits are there, ticking along underneath. We hang handles on them, for easy grab-holds: *habituation, learned behaviors, reflex, carrot-and-stick, consequence-based decision-making, path of least resistance, animal instinct, field training, reward-punishment, pain avoidance, gut instinct...*

* * * * *

Every morning, the planet I want to inhabit, and inhabited all night in my dreams, has been replaced with some screwy, cockeyed replica that should not exist -- but it does. There is no denying it, no running away from it, no way to clear it from view with a shake of the head or a series of blinks or rubs of the eyes.

Every morning, I wake to Planet X. Every morning, Earth has been kidnapped again, or I have, and this place -- this imitation, this....

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this alternate world

-- is where I am.

Oh, it's a fantastic facsimile, I'll grant you that -- every bit as beautiful a planet as you'd ever want to see, just exactly like Earth, from what I've seen so far. A lot of the same people are here, people that I know. I haven't noticed anything odd about them so far, so my working theory is that they really are the same people I know -- they just don't realize they've been moved to another planet, along with me.

At first, I thought I was *home*. But, slowly at first, I started seeing a lot of things I couldn't explain, things that made no sense at all. I wrote off quite a bit of that at first, to having been away, and to my having changed a lot. But, then, it became really obvious that the same -- *how to explain it?*

That the same

rules

, maybe, no longer applied.

Oh, all the same physical laws applied: gravity was on, the sunshine-evaporation-condensation-rain cycle continued like always, the seasons cycled through, all the non-human things. That's how it dawned on me: *all the non-human things*.

Flipped on its head, then, seen the other way around, the only things that

had

changed were the

human

constructs, the

human

rules, the

human

ways of doing things.

I'm not sure when the switch was made, but I became more positive all the time that the change I was seeing had nothing to do with my being away for a while. Things don't change *that* fast, not like that -- it's just not natural.

I mean, when I left -- *give you an example, here* -- when I left, you'd turn on the radio, and you'd have all kinds of stations to choose from. The music made sense, and most of the jokes and

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banter were still pretty lame, like always. And whenever the news came on, they'd hit the high points, fill in some details, and you'd never once hear the newscaster say "I," except maybe in a brief aside or comment about something, at the end, while making a transition back to music or whatever.

Now, you turn on the radio, and there's only a couple stations -- the same stations in all the cities I went through on my way back here -- and all you hear is people on the radio going crazy, shouting at each other, screaming at each other, talking over the top of each other -- bedlam, just chaos! Everybody right and, *get this*, everybody wrong as all get out, to me! Loony bin stuff, laughing academy stuff, crazy talk that'd get you a free room at the rubber bungalow hotel.

And the announcers are no better -- they all seem to be high on something, talking like they've had a complete break from reality, like they've snapped, just gone around the bend -- telling people to vote for things that are nowhere close to being in their best interests... making up all kinds of crazy lies about what's going on, making fun of people trying to help people in need, talking about how company bosses deserve making a thousand times more than the average worker... about how companies deserve more tax handouts, even though their profits are through the roof, headin' for the moon... how it's only *right* that the rich should be in charge of everything and how we need to cut them a break, give them some more slack...

I even heard somebody say that money is just like the freedom of speech, and that companies are like people -- so you should be able to auction off public office to the highest bidder, and how companies deserve to have all the rights a human being has, and how...

Oh, I dunno, *just crazy stuff*. After a while, you can't listen, *you know what I mean?*

And the newspapers! You can't hardly find one, and when you do, the thing is smaller than a postage stamp, and hardly has any pages in it. You see a teevee, and turn it on, and it's the same as the radio -- no matter where you are, what city you're in, it's all the same, like it was being made up in one place, in one insane asylum, and then sent out everywhere, all the same crazy stuff, over and over.

It's not really news, either -- it's more opinions, and people screaming at each other, like the radio, only there's images always twirling and spinning and snapping off and on, like a

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kaleidoscope worked by somebody with ants in their pants, and it's enough to make you seasick watching that jumble and tumble of pinwheels and circuses and flashbulbs!

Then, you see somebody or other in some public office someplace being asked why something is going on, or not going on, and you get a mush-mouth answer that's no answer at all, and the crowd of people and reporters shake their heads and move on, and ask another question, like they got an actual answer to the first question! *Just bananas!*

I've even seen on teevee some Republicans, believe it or not, on the House Science Committee talking, and there's no way they in believe in science at all. They seem to be doing their best to prove science is wrong, and how faith in God is the best kind of science you can have, and how it has to be put back in the classrooms. You have people talking about their religions and how it should be like law for everybody, and I'm thinking, what kind of crackpot place is this? Somebody's religion's a *private* thing, and it's got no business being discussed, out in public, let alone being bantered around for public policies and laws!

You think that's something? I saw the other day some Republicans talking about all the years they spent in office doing just one thing: Saying "no," over and over and over, no matter what -- and, well, they were proud of that. Might as well tell the people to go hang, right out straight, and be done with it! I'll give you one idea what *Ike*'d do to a Republican like that, *you just bet ya*.

And that's just the news -- you oughta see the programs! People plotting against each other, lying to one another, pretending to be friends with people until they got all their money and favors, laughing at the misfortune of their neighbors -- people completely out of control, just tearing their homes, and each other, to pieces, like they're sick, or like, I dunno, like there's crazy demons in them or something...

I'm telling you, I have no idea what's happened to this country since I been away, but my skin hasn't stopped crawling since the day I got out and put my foot back on this soil.

Hey, you got a cigarette? I quit two, three years ago -- but I could sure use a smoke right now, if you've got an extra one on you.

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I see in the news today where Rick Perry is eating his feet again, and as fast as he get them both in his mouth. Well, I suppose stuffing his mouth full, and chewing on them, keeps them out of the way, so he can't shoot himself in them, over and over again, like usual. This time around, he's saying that gays are like alcoholics, and that homosexuality is a mental disorder.

- The Texas GOP, of course, has formally endorsed the discredited practice of therapy to change a person's natural sexual preference. Perry says, "Whether or not you feel compelled to follow a particular lifestyle or not, you have the ability to decide not to do that."

It is difficult to know where to start the lengthy process of deconstructing such deeply held, deeply incorrect, and clearly numerous patterns of wrongheadedness, misunderstanding, homophobia, assorted lacks of awareness, and thereby attempt to banish all such sociopathic and psychotic fears and hallucinations from Perry, currently masquerading as they are, as clear, factual understandings of the world around him.

It is tempting to pose a scenario, and frame a question to Perry, and all like him, using Perry's own words. The scenario is this: Perry awakens and, overnight, a majority of the population is gay; Perry awakens, meanwhile, as his heterosexual self. Attempts are continuously made to dissuade Perry from his "chosen" sexuality, as it is obvious he has consciously chosen, using reason and personal preference, a persecuted, marginalized lifestyle carrying many societal penalties and stigmas.

- Attempts are made to send him through psychotherapy in order to reset his sexual preferences to the societal norms of the majority. Perry is repeatedly told, "Whether or not you feel compelled to follow a particular lifestyle or not, you have the ability to decide not to do that."

Perry continues to be a heterosexual. He feels compelled to follow that lifestyle, therapy or no. He is told he has the ability to choose to be gay. He is called an alcoholic, and said to have a mental disorder, when he clings, against all reason, to his heterosexuality.

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I see in the news where David Brat upended Eric Cantor, to the surprise of many. Brat is, it is said, a "free-market, Milton Friedman" economist. This means he is a Specialist of Nothing, a Master of Vapors, a Chief of Illusions, as there is no such thing as the free market, or a level playing field, or an Invisible Hand of Self-Correction, or anything else, in the Marketplace, or anything like laissez faire capitalism.

It also means Brat is delusional, peddling a long-failed policy of voodoo economics in which the only trickle-down that ever applied were occasional crumbs falling from the banquet tables of the rich and self-serving elite, as they gorged themselves at the trough. There was also the trickle-down success of the very pointed, and mindfully purposeful, urination of that class upon the remainder of society. That was successful, too. Wildly so.

It further means Brat is peddling the wares of a recanted economist who finally saw, later in life, the excruciating, searing errors he made in his thinking, after seeing what his scorched-earth policies wrought in this country.

Brat has also taught ethics, and has a Master's Degree from Princeton Theological Seminary. He has also published papers of an apparently appalling degree of self-contradiction -- bearing titles such as "God and Advanced Mammon --Can Theological Types Handle Usury and Capitalism?" and "An Analysis of the Moral Foundations in Ayn Rand."

Oh, my. More Perry-itis. Where to start with such a rich, bountiful stew of utter nonsense? OK --
ethics: How ethical is it to perpetuate lies such as free-market capitalism, or to teach discredited economic policy recanted by its author and responsible for wreaking so much unending misery for a nation, its people, its institutions, and its dreams?

How ethical is it -- *how godly is it* -- to attempt to reconcile the lusty avarice of a moneylender's lifestyle, dreams, and deepest desires, with Jesus unceremoniously booting them all out the temples in disgust, righteous rage, indignation, utter revulsion, well-placed wrath?

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How ethical is it -- *how godly is it* -- to even marginally suggest that Ayn Rand's greed-based, *m*
e-only,
supremely anti-Christian
, *godless*
pioneering of a host of socially poisonous, self-deluded, self-serving,
hallucinogenically-grandiose claptrap contained any
moral
underpinnings whatsoever?

Anyone with a minor exposure to, and even passing understanding of, the Bible, Milton Friedman's actions and policies, recent American history, and the supremely hypocritical, self-centric, ultimately belittling, inhuman philosophies and stances of Ayn Rand -- not to mention her personal beliefs and actions ranging from the dangerously bizarre to the extraordinarily sick, demented, and severely twisted -- would conclude that, frightening and terrible as it was to have a die-stamped, zombie-droid like Eric Cantor in public office, having a David Brat in office is like going from an intentional kitchen grease fire to widespread arson operations, setting wildfires in drought-stricken national forests.

Other than that, I am sure Brat is a *fine* choice, given the traditions of *Virginia*, and given the traditions of a GO
P-held Congress
-- especially the most do-nothing, obstructive, childish,
hold-my-breath-until-I'm-blue
, unprincipled, self-centered, hypocritical, self-contradictory, pinheaded Congress -- one so totally and irrevocably unconcerned with constituents, and exerting and angling itself only toward its own membership rewards -- since David Brat's God was beardless and in short pants.

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I see in the news where an 89-year-old World War Two vet went AWOL from his nursing home in the UK, in order to attend D-Day commemorations in France. Staff had tried to sign up Bernard Jordan for a formal trip for the 70th anniversary event, it seems, but were too late. Jordan, who has always been able to come and go as he wishes, any time he likes, simply decided on a DIY holiday. He went to France. *Again*.

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Finally, finally -- somewhere, somehow, life made sense again, for someone. □ At least, for a little while -- even if for only a brief instant, for a brief spark of time.

Epilogue

There's double-talk, *jargoneering*, mumbo-jumbo, and gibberish; there's also tail-chasing, circular logic, and spiral thinking -- all shining traits of Republicans, Tea Partyers, and the disciples of Friedman and Rand and Perry, who also insist they are disciples of God. And may the Fates and Fortunes help you, should you and yours -- should your entire nation -- be cursed with all of these at once...

... and we *are*. Which explains an awful, *awful* lot.

In the end, there's only the shrieking, nails-on-chalkboard insanity of who we have become -- who we have *decided* to become, who we have *allowed* ourselves to become -- with our eyes wide open, our hearts missing in action, and our minds slammed shut.

Good morning. □ Welcome to another day on Planet X.